

Price and Expectations

GQG Partners Global Quality Equity Fund

“A thoughtful investment process contemplates both probability and payoffs and carefully considers where the consensus, as revealed by a price, may be wrong”

— Michael Mauboussin, *Expectations Investing*

Like most things in life, writing quarterly commentaries has its pluses and minuses. On the plus side, it is a great tool to communicate with all of you and share some insight into how we’re thinking about the world. However, on the minus side, one fraction of a year tells us very little about returns that are forecast to be delivered over several decades. So, while every small chunk of time always has an element of noise, some quarters just seem to be noisier than others.

On the bright side, a handful of things played out better for us during this quarter than the prior two. In homage to our first quarter message, perhaps quality was in fact — “on sale?”

During the quarter, contributors to performance were broad-based and indicative of our more bar-belled portfolios, balancing sectors like technology and communication services with more cyclical areas such as materials and financials. We also saw a higher degree of breadth across equity markets: on a sector basis, every sector is positive on a year-to-date basis whereas last calendar year, several sectors were negative, like energy and financials.

While we believe many sectors are currently performing well, as denoted by an increase in price, it is important to remember that not everything is worth *owning*. We continue to remain very selective and focused on the underlying fundamentals of our portfolio companies across the globe. While this has been a noisy quarter, this noise has allowed us to uncover some less obvious sources of forward-looking quality. Below, we will highlight some of those examples we came across during the quarter.

AN EXPECTATIONS FRAMEWORK

Last quarter, we highlighted the reality of large, unexpected events that can cause a whole host of problems, which can then be exacerbated by the way our brains process information. This quarter, the world ventured beyond the unexpected things in reality, going straight into the imaginary, with someone paying around US\$18,000 for a “sculpture” that literally does not exist, as highlighted nicely in Exhibit 1:

EXHIBIT 1: INVISIBLE SCULPTURE



Sources: Salvatore Garau, Your Imagination

Now, it is hard to pin a cause on everything, and it is even harder to pin a cause on individual motivations. It is puzzling to us what value the buyer saw (pun intended) in the white space of the suggested placing area, but as we are always looking for insights, maybe there is something to be gleaned here in the white space.

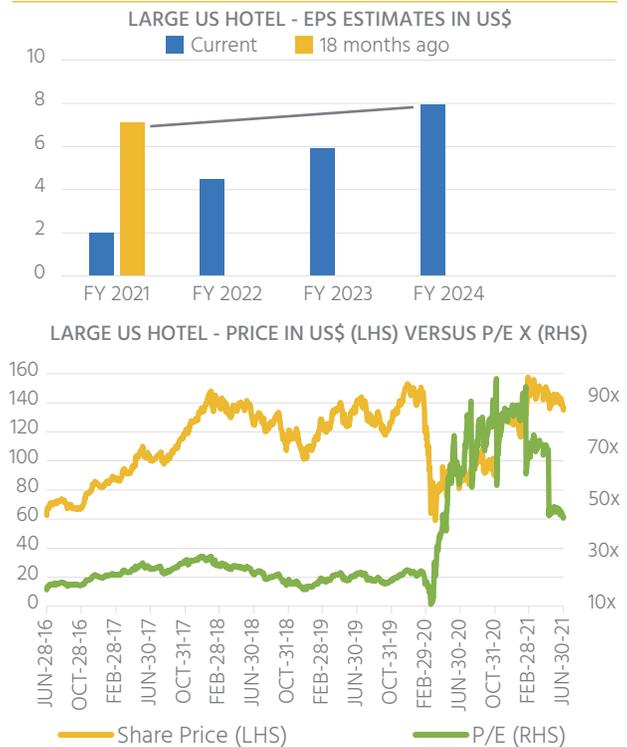
There is a two-dollar phrase called *stochastic resonance* that is often deployed in statistical filtering. While we don't need to overly focus on all of the applications of “randomness,” it is an important concept that is often misunderstood. We kicked this off, as we often do, underscoring how noisy short-term periods can be.

What stochastic resonance refers to is when noise can actually illuminate the signal.

Whether that noise

comes from short-term periods or headlines around invisible sculptures, maybe the best way to highlight signal is through contrast. In Exhibit 2, we have highlighted consensus analyst expectations for one of the largest global hotel franchises by market cap, combined with both 5-year forward price-to-earnings (P/E) ratios and price returns. The top chart highlights analyst estimates for the next four fiscal years (2021 inclusive), while showing what 2021 expected earnings were just 18 months ago. Think about this: just 18 months ago, this company was *expected* to earn more than US\$7 per share in the current year. Now they are expected to earn roughly 30 per cent of that. In fact, estimates show this company is not expected to earn in excess of US\$7 per share until the end of 2024. Now, look at the chart on the bottom of Exhibit 2. The orange line reflects the current price while the green line reflects the forward P/E for this company. While *expectations for earnings* declined and were kicked three years out, the price is basically at three-year highs! So, investors are paying an all-time high price, for all-time highs, in earnings uncertainty. Therefore, it should not be surprising that we have avoided these types of situations, which, in our opinion,

EXHIBIT 2: HIGH EXPECTATIONS?



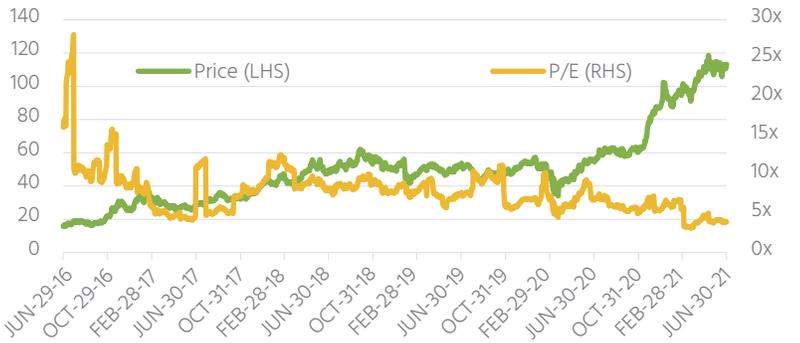
Source: Capital IQ as of June 30, 2021 for consensus analyst EPS estimates, share price and 5-year forward P/E of a large US hotel operator. Any securities identified and/or described do not represent all securities purchased, sold, or recommended for inclusion in the portfolio and no assumption should be made that such securities or future recommendations were or will be profitable in the future. **PAST PERFORMANCE DOES NOT GUARANTEE FUTURE RESULTS.**

are not unique to this company but in fact illustrative of a broader theme, of “pull forward” returns for certain cyclical, fully-loaded, reflation themes.

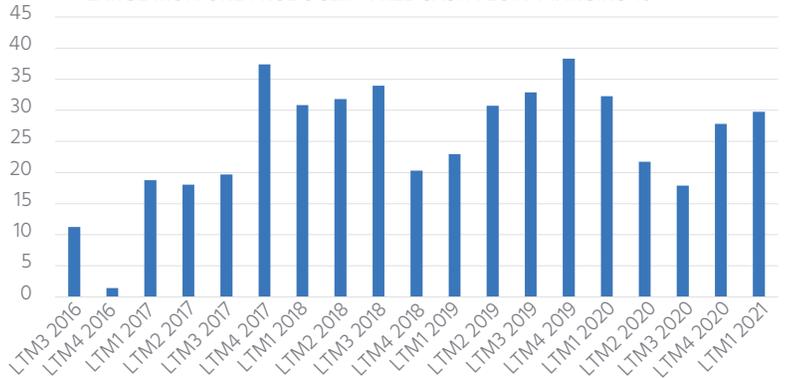
Contrast Exhibit 2 with Exhibit 3. Exhibit 3 is an area that we like quite a bit and is not commonly frequented by a quality growth manager — iron ore. We believe the setup for select companies in the iron ore space, where the largest producers control more than two-thirds of *global* production, is the opposite of Exhibit 2. Notice that while this iron ore producer has seen price appreciation, the company’s forward P/E has fallen substantially. Not only that, free cash flow (FCF) margins for the company are roughly 30 per cent, which is in software industry FCF margin territory. This is certainly unexpected for a company in the physical world with real costs and real machines. Unlike invisible sculptures, there is nothing imaginary here. While there is no doubt that this industry is full of noise and complexities, the supply/demand argument is compelling. In our opinion, even if spot iron ore prices were to retreat from their recent highs (a very possible scenario), FCF margins in

EXHIBIT 3: LOW EXPECTATIONS?

LARGE IRON ORE PRODUCER - IMPROVING PRICE IN US\$ (LHS) AND FUNDAMENTALS X (RHS)



LARGE IRON ORE PRODUCER - FREE CASH FLOW MARGINS %



Sources: S&P Capital IQ, and GQG analysis as of June 30, 2021 for share price, 5-year forward P/E, and quarterly trailing 12-month unlevered free cash flow margins of a large iron ore producer. Any securities identified and/or described do not represent all securities purchased, sold, or recommended for inclusion in the portfolio and no assumption should be made that such securities or future recommendations were or will be profitable in the future. **PAST PERFORMANCE DOES NOT GUARANTEE FUTURE RESULTS.** LTM = Last Twelve Months.

EXHIBIT 4: EARNINGS GO BBBRRR

CUMULATIVE EARNINGS GROWTH OVER PAST FIVE YEARS %



Source: Bloomberg, as at June 30, 2021 for cumulative EPS growth in US dollars. **PAST PERFORMANCE DOES NOT GUARANTEE FUTURE RESULTS.** You cannot invest directly in an index.

Exhibit 3 are likely to remain in the mid-teens. Not bad for a company that posted near-zero FCF margins five years ago and once again, in our view, an illustration of our forward-looking quality approach.

Lastly, the expectations framework is not unique to iron ore, as depicted in Exhibit 4. In our non-US strategies, our allocation to emerging markets, particularly Brazil and Russia, have increased, generally at the expense of our China exposure. Why is this the case? We have always said earnings are like gravity — it matters — even if it is a bit cyclical! As evidenced in Exhibit 4, though in our view there is no doubt the world is full of “money printers going BRRRR,” we have another take on this where the B and the R represent Brazil and Russia. While we are not trying to resurrect the old BRICs moniker, it is impressive to see that the cumulative earnings growth over the last five years for Brazil has now surpassed that of China, with Russia not too far behind. Therefore, while China garners all of the headlines (for better or worse), once again noise has helped highlight the signal: bottom-up

company fundamentals in both Brazil and Russia are far better, in our opinion, than many market participants are giving them credit for.

Does any of this guarantee that next quarter, next year, or the next five years will play out positively for our strategies? Of course not. Do we think that based on market expectations our global forward-looking quality approach gives us a higher likelihood of being correct than more dogmatic approaches? We do. Regardless, we continue to sift through the data (noise included) to find the signal, wherever it exists.

GQG PARTNERS GLOBAL QUALITY EQUITY FUND

EXHIBIT 5: FUND NET TOTAL RETURN PERFORMANCE %

AS OF JUNE 30, 2021	1 MO	3 MOS	YTD	1 YR	3 YRS	SINCE INCEPTION (29-MAR-19)	2020	2019*
Institutional Class GQRX	2.47	10.83	12.37	24.54	—	18.09	14.75	12.84
Investor Class GQRPX	2.47	10.77	12.32	24.36	—	17.90	14.55	12.70
Retirement Class GQRRX†	2.54	10.83	12.37	24.65	—	18.09	14.75	12.86
MSCI ACWI (Net)	1.32	7.39	12.30	39.26		18.74	16.25	12.88

The performance data quoted represents past performance. PAST PERFORMANCE DOES NOT GUARANTEE FUTURE RESULTS. Current performance of the portfolio may be lower or higher than the performance quoted. Performance data current to the most recent month-end may be obtained by calling +1 (866) 362-8333. The investment return and principal value of an investment will fluctuate so that an investor's shares, when redeemed, may be worth more or less than their original cost. Returns greater than one year are annualized. Performance may reflect agreements to limit a Fund's expenses, which would further reduce performance if not in effect. The expense ratios for Institutional Class shares are 0.75% (net) and 1.14% (gross); for Investor Class shares are 0.90% (net) and 1.35% (gross); and for Retirement Class† shares are 0.75% (net) and 1.29% (gross). The adviser has contractually agreed to waive fees until November 30, 2021. *Indicates partial-year return since inception.

During the second quarter of 2021, GQG Partners Global Quality Equity Fund (GQRPX) outperformed the benchmark MSCI ACWI (Net) USD by 3.38 per cent, posting a total net of fees return of 10.77 per cent versus the benchmark's 7.39 per cent return (see Exhibit 5).

Among the largest contributors to relative performance during the quarter were stock selection in the United States and both the information technology and communication services sectors.

The largest negative contributors to relative performance during the quarter included stock selection in China, Germany, and France.

EXHIBIT 6: TOP FIVE FUND CONTRIBUTORS & DETRACTORS BY HOLDING FOR 2Q 2021

TOP CONTRIBUTORS BY HOLDING	END WEIGHT %	CONTRIBUTION TO RETURN BPS	BOTTOM CONTRIBUTORS BY HOLDING	END WEIGHT %	CONTRIBUTION TO RETURN BPS
NVIDIA Corp	5.1	+150	JD.com Inc	0.0	-30
AstraZeneca PLC	5.5	+97	Volkswagen AG	1.7	-23
Alphabet Inc	6.9	+95	Abbott Laboratories	0.0	-19
Target Corp	4.5	+77	Newmont Corp	0.9	-13
Facebook Inc	4.7	+73	Ping An Insurance Group Co of China Ltd	0.0	-5

Source: Northern Trust for the three months ending June 30, 2021. Portfolio holdings are subject to change without notice and are US dollar-weighted based upon the total net assets of the portfolio. The holdings identified and described do not represent all securities purchased, sold, or recommended for inclusion in the Fund and no assumption should be made that such securities or future recommendations were or will be profitable in the future. Current and future holdings are subject to risk. There are 100 basis points (bps) in one percent.

Contributing holdings over the second quarter included:

— **NVIDIA CORP**

Nvidia is the leading designer of graphics processing units that enhance the experience on computing platforms. The firm's chips are used in a variety of end markets, including high-end PCs for gaming, data centers, and automotive infotainment systems. During the quarter, the company continued to benefit from positive momentum in the GPU market.

— **ALPHABET INC**

Alphabet dominates the online search market with Google's global share above 80%, via which it generates strong revenue growth and cash flow. Google's ecosystem strengthens as its products are adopted by more users, which was aided by the pandemic, making its online advertising services more attractive to advertisers and publishers and resulting in increased online ad revenue. During the quarter, the company continued to see positive momentum in its underlying business segments.

Detracting holdings over the second quarter included:

— **ABBOTT LABORATORIES**

Abbott manufactures and markets medical devices, adult and pediatric nutritional products, diagnostic equipment and testing kits, and branded generic drugs. During the quarter, management cut 2021 EPS guidance due to a softening in demand for Covid-19 PCR testing.

— **JD.COM INC**

JD.com is China's second-largest e-commerce company after Alibaba in terms of transaction volume, offering a wide selection of authentic products at competitive prices, with speedy and reliable delivery. The company, and the Chinese E-commerce sector more broadly, were in our view all under pressure from a rapidly deteriorating regulatory environment during the quarter.

DEFINITIONS

Earnings per share (EPS) is the monetary value of earnings per outstanding share of common stock for a company.

Price-to-earnings (P/E) is the ratio of a company's share price to the company's earnings per share.

Free cash flow (FCF) is the monetary value of cash a company generates after accounting for cash outflows to support operations and maintain its capital assets.

END NOTES

ⁱ <https://news.artnet.com/art-world/italian-artist-auctioned-off-invisible-sculpture-18300-literally-made-nothing-1976181>

UNDERSTANDING INVESTMENT RISK

Investing involves risks, including possible loss of principal. There is no guarantee the GQG Partners Global Quality Equity Fund will achieve its stated objective. Stock prices of small- and mid-size companies may be more volatile and less liquid than those of large companies. International investments may involve risk of capital loss from unfavorable fluctuation in currency values, from differences in generally accepted accounting principles or from social, economic or political instability in other nations. Emerging markets involve heightened risks related to the same factors as well as increased volatility and lower trading volume. The primary risk of participation notes is that changes in the market value of securities held by the Fund and of the derivative instruments relating to those securities may not be proportionate. Participation notes are also subject to illiquidity and counterparty risk. The Fund is non-diversified. Investments in commodities are subject to higher volatility than more traditional investments. Trading through Stock Connect is subject to a number of restriction that may affect the Fund's investments and returns, including a daily quota that limits the maximum net purchase under the Stock Connect each day.

You should carefully consider the investment objective, risks, charges, and expenses of the Fund before investing. The Fund's prospectus and summary prospectus contain this and other important information about the Fund, which can be obtained by calling +1 (866) 362-8333 or visiting gqgpartners.com. Please read the prospectus carefully before investing. The Fund's Statement of Additional Information can also be obtained by calling +1 (866) 362-8333 or visiting gqgpartners.com.

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MSCI benchmark returns have been obtained from MSCI, a non-affiliated third-party source. Neither MSCI nor any other party involved in or related to compiling, computing or creating the MSCI data makes any express or implied warranties or representations with respect to such data (or the results to be obtained by the use thereof), and all such parties hereby expressly disclaim all warranties of originality, accuracy, completeness, merchantability or fitness for a particular purpose with respect to any of such data. Without limiting the foregoing, in no event shall MSCI, any of its affiliates or any third party involved in or related to compiling, computing, or creating the data have any liability for any direct, indirect, special, punitive, consequential or any other damages (including lost profits) even if notified of the possibility of such damages.

The MSCI All Country World (Net) Index (MSCI ACWI) is a global equity index, which tracks stocks from 23 developed and 27 emerging markets countries. Developed countries include: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Hong Kong, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Singapore, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the UK, and the US. Emerging markets countries include: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, China, Colombia, Czech Republic, Egypt, Greece, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Korea, Kuwait, Malaysia, Mexico, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Qatar, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Taiwan, Thailand, Turkey, and the United Arab Emirates. With 2,975 constituents (as of June 30, 2021), the index covers approximately 85% of the global investable equity opportunity set. The MSCI Brazil Index (USD) is designed to measure the performance of the large and mid cap segments of the Brazilian market. The MSCI China Index (USD) captures large and mid cap representation across China A shares, H shares, B shares, Red chips, P chips, and foreign listings (e.g. ADRs). The MSCI Russia Index (USD) is designed to measure the performance of the large and mid cap segments of the Russian market. Net total return indices reinvest dividends after the deduction of withholding taxes, using (for international indices) a

tax rate applicable to nonresident institutional investors who do not benefit from double taxation treaties.

Information about benchmark indices is provided to allow you to compare it to the performance of GQG strategies. Investors often use these well-known and widely recognized indices as one way to gauge the investment performance of an investment manager's strategy compared to investment sectors that correspond to the strategy. However, GQG's investment strategies are actively managed and not intended to replicate the performance of the indices; the performance and volatility of GQG's investment strategies may differ materially from the performance and volatility of their benchmark indices,

and their holdings will differ significantly from the securities that comprise the indices. You cannot invest directly in indices, which do not take into account trading commissions and costs.

*Retirement Class (Class R6) shares are only available to employee benefit plans that are sponsored by one or more employers or employee organizations. Such employee benefit plans must purchase R6 shares through a plan level or omnibus account.

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